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POSTAL REGULATORY
COMMISSION

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 7, 2021

The Honorable Michael M. Kubayanda
Chairman
Postal Regulatory Commission
901 New York Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20268

Dear Chairman Kubayanda:

We write to express deep concerns about the transfer of educational bound printed matter (BPM) from the market-dominant to competitive category. While we understand the urgent need for the Postal Service to move towards a sounder financial footing, a price increase on educational mailings through reclassification will do little to improve the Postal Service's finances. We therefore request that the Postal Regulatory Commission not endorse the Postal Service's request to transfer BPM to the competitive category without first exempting educational materials sent to pre-K–12 schools.

In response to congressional requests for information, the Postal Service noted that it does not have a clear understanding of how much revenue this change would raise. The Postal Service also noted that educational materials sent to pre-K–12 schools comprise only approximately 1.5% of all bound printed matter sent by consumers.¹

The Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act requires the Postal Regulatory Commission to consider “the educational, cultural, scientific, and informational value to the recipient of mail matter” in establishing rates and classes.² The educational nature of this important type of mailed matter, which includes reading-list information booklets, warrants its exclusion from reclassification.

Reading-list information booklets give children and teachers across the country—including those in rural areas and in Title I schools—access to a broad array of free and affordable books, as well as a variety of other literary resources. In addition, 88% of children say they are more likely to finish a book they have picked out themselves than they are to finish one assigned to them.³ Booklets sent as bound printed matter offer a selection of books that children and teachers can choose from, increasing the likelihood that these books will, in fact, be read.

¹ Letter from Sheila T. Meyers, Government Liaison, United States Postal Service, to Chairwoman Carolyn B. Maloney, House Committee on Oversight and Reform (June 24, 2020).

² Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act of 2006, Pub. L. No. 109-435.

³ Scholastic, *Kids & Family Reading Report: Finding Their Story*, 7th ed. (2019) (online at www.scholastic.com/content/dam/KFRR/Downloads/KFRRReport_Finding%20Their%20Story.pdf).

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In addition, the Postal Service has primary control over the shipment of these materials. Educational publishers ship reading-list information booklets in shrink-wrapped bundles for each school in compliance with BPM specifications. No mailer other than the Postal Service can suitably process these bundles. Even if, as the Postal Service has shared with us in previous communications, "a price increase is necessary regardless of whether the product remains in the market-dominant category or moves to the competitive category," our concern remains that reclassification of all BPM would unnecessarily impose price increases on educational mailings, potentially reducing many children's access to educational materials.⁴

There is bipartisan, bicameral concern that the proposed change could result in understocked classroom libraries, harming learning opportunities for elementary, middle, and high school students, particularly economically disadvantaged students who are more likely to have experienced interruptions in learning as a result of the pandemic. In addition, given the lack of information on the impact this change would have on revenue, this reclassification may have limited benefit. It is critical that any substantial change to BPM pricing be carefully and thoughtfully reviewed.

For these reasons, we request that the Postal Regulatory Commission not endorse the Postal Service's request to transfer BPM to the competitive category without first exempting educational materials sent to pre-K-12 schools.

Sincerely,



Carolyn B. Maloney
Chairwoman
House Committee on Oversight and Reform



Roy Blunt
United States Senator



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator



Blaine Luetkemeyer
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable James Comer, Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Reform

⁴ Letter from Sheila T. Meyers, Government Liaison, United States Postal Service, to Chairwoman Carolyn B. Maloney, House Committee on Oversight and Reform (Jan. 13, 2021).